



NARAL
Pro-Choice America

National Medical and Public-Health Organizations Support Confidential Health Services for Young People

American Medical Association: "With respect to parental involvement when minors seek an abortion, the AMA believes that the following guidelines constitute good medical practice: (1) Physicians should ascertain the law in their state on parental involvement...(2) Physicians should strongly encourage minors to discuss their pregnancy with their parents...(3) Physicians should not feel or be compelled to require minors to obtain consent of their parents before deciding whether to undergo an abortion. The patient – even an adolescent – generally must decide whether, on balance, parental involvement is advisable. Accordingly, minors should ultimately be allowed to decide whether parental involvement is appropriate. (4) Physicians should try to ensure that minor patients have made an informed decision...Minors should be urged to seek the advice and counsel of those adults in whom they have confidence, including professional counselors, relatives, friends, or the clergy." (*Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs; Report H; House of Delegates Meeting; June 1992*)

American Academy of Pediatrics: "The AAP reaffirms its position that the rights of adolescents to confidential care when considering an abortion should be protected. Genuine concern for the best interests of minors argues strongly against mandatory parental consent and notification laws. Although the stated intent of mandatory parental consent laws is to enhance family communication and parental responsibility, there is no supporting evidence that the laws have these effects... There is evidence that such legislation may have an adverse impact on some families and that it increases the risk of medical and psychological harm to the adolescent. Judicial bypass provisions do not ameliorate the risk." (*"The Adolescent's Right to Confidential Care When Considering Abortion" (RE9614); American Academy of Pediatrics, Policy Statement; Vol. 97, Number 5, May 1996*)

American Public Health Association: APHA "urges that...confidential health services (be) tailored to the needs of adolescents, including sexually active adolescents, adolescents considering sexual intercourse, and those seeking information, counseling, or services related to preventing, continuing or terminating a pregnancy." (*Policy 9001: "Adolescent Access to Comprehensive, Confidential Reproductive Health Care"; APHA Policy Statement, 1990*)

Society for Adolescent Medicine: "The most practical reason for clinicians to grant confidentiality to adolescent patients is to facilitate accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment....If an assurance of confidentiality is not extended, this may create an obstacle to care since that adolescent may withhold information, delay entry into care, or refuse care." (*"Confidential Health Care for Adolescents"; SAM Position Paper, 2001*)

American Medical Women's Association: "We feel that abortion is a decision that should be reached between patients and physicians, and we believe that forced parental involvement will have a negative impact on the doctor-patient relationship." (*Letter from AMWA President Clarita E. Herrera to Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen expressing opposition to the Child Custody Protection Act. April 22, 1999*)

American College of Physicians: "Physicians should be knowledgeable about state laws governing the rights of adolescent patients to confidentiality and the adolescent's legal right to consent to treatment...The physician must not release information without the patient's consent." (*ACP Ethics Manual: Fourth Edition; Approved October 26, 1997*)

American Psychological Association: "[E]fforts need to be undertaken to promote open, meaningful communication between parents and adolescent children. In the absence of such communication (e.g., as in the case of abusive families), parental notification and consent laws place the health of adolescents in jeopardy." (*"Parental Consent Laws for Adolescent Reproductive Health Care: What Does the Psychological Research Say?"; APA Factsheet, February 2000.*)